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SUBJECT: PRESIDENCY TO NAME ADMINISTRATORS FOR ABYEI

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 047  
(B) KHARTOUM 025  
(C) KHARTOM 026

11. (SBU) Summary: The Presidency may name an interim administration for Abyei soon despite the fact that borders have yet to be defined, according to NCP negotiator Dirdeiry Mohamed Ahmed. Dirdeiry boasted that the SPLM-NCP relationship has "never been better" following the SPLM's rejoining of the GNU, but expressed concerns about elections in Sudan given current events in Kenya. End summary.

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BRINGING ORDER TO ABYEI  
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12. (SBU) Parliamentarian and influential NCP member Dirdeiry Mohamed Ahmed informed poloffs on 15 January that the Presidency would soon name a chief and deputy administrator to lead Abyei's "interim administration." Although in the past the SPLM demanded that the NCP accept the results of the Abyei Boundary Commission (ABC) report before an administration was named, Dirdeiry said that the SPLM seems to have withdrawn this demand and now accepts the creation of an interim administration without resolution of the border dispute. In regard to the SPLM's 31 December appointment of Edward Lino as the "SPLM Chairman in Abyei area" (Ref A), Dirdeiry said that Lino will first serve as merely the SPLM party representative, but later will serve as chief of the interim administration that is called for in the CPA, once authorized by the Presidency. Press reports indicate that the Umma Party has also named a representative to Abyei - Mohamed El Dorick Bakht. Dirdeiry, unaware of this appointment, surmised this was because Umma party leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi, has taken a keen personal interest in being involved in resolving the Abyei dispute. [Note: As part of the overall NCP/SPLM deal that ended the SPLM's walkout from participation in the GNU, the partners agreed that an SPLM member would serve as chief administrator and an NCP member as deputy.]

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ELECTIONS - AVOIDING ANOTHER KENYA  
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13. (SBU) Dirdeiry, who served as DCM in Sudan's Embassy in Nairobi, expressed hope that the Sudanese electoral process would be fair and transparent so that Sudan can avoid a crisis similar to Kenya's. He observed that Sudan had the potential to split violently along ethnic lines, as is currently happening in Kenya. He lamented that the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC) (of which he is a member) has not been fully transparent in drafting the electoral law, and hoped that the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly would be more transparent in their handling of the law. If the NCRC cannot manage to produce a draft law to the Council of Ministers within the next few days, Dirdeiry said that the law would likely not be ratified until April 2008 when the National Assembly is back in session. That said, he suggested that it is not out of

the question for the Presidency to ask the National Assembly to hold a special session in order to review and ratify the electoral law. Once the draft law reaches the Council of Ministers and the Parliament, Dirdeiry stated that it should only take 2 to 3 weeks for the bill to be approved. (Note: NCRC Co-Chair Abdulla Idris told poloff January 14 that Parliament will likely call a special session to pass the bill. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) Dirdeiry described the current elections timeline as putting Sudan "between a rock and a hard place." If the elections law is not passed until April 2008 and the electoral commission not named until May 2008, the commission will only have 9 or 10 months to prepare and execute elections ahead of the 2009 rainy season and the CPA-mandated elections date (Ref B). Dirdeiry said that donor assistance (especially technical) would definitely be welcomed for electoral preparation, but did not know how open the GNU would be to international election observers. He warned that the elections could prove to be a problem if they are not taken seriously by the Sudanese. If not handled carefully, elections could create ethnic tension and polarization and lead to violence, said Dirdeiry. Dirdeiry believes that the elections will be hotly contested at the presidential and gubernatorial levels and said that Umma party leader Sadiq al-Mahdi will likely run for President.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - A PROMISING WAY FORWARD  
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¶5. (SBU) Dirdeiry, who is among the NCP members named to the joint NCP/SPLM Executive Committee (EC) that emerged from the recent political crisis, confirmed that the group will have its first meeting January 24. Asked if the EC would meet regularly, he replied that, as a permanent body, it will have to draft rules of procedure, which will specify how often the EC will meet. Dirdeiry predicted the EC would focus principally on elections, borders, and

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programs to foster unity and reconciliation. (Note: Press reports January 16 indicated that the Executive Committee will be expanded to become a "Political and Executive Committee" (PEC) with 18 members, nine from each side. Taha and Machar remain co-chairmen and we expect the other members to remain as well, with several additions. End note.)

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SPLM-NCP RELATIONSHIP "NEVER BETTER"  
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¶6. (SBU) Dirdeiry described the SPLM-NCP relationship as having "never been better" following the SPLM's December 2007 decision to rejoin the GNU. Dirdeiry explained that Pagan Amum, Secretary General of the SPLM and recently-appointed GNU Minister for Cabinet Affairs, was in the past "demonized" by the NCP, but has now been tapped by the NCP to resolve critical disputes such as the SPLA-Misseryia clashes in South Kordofan. Dirdeiry claimed that a visit by Amum and GNU Minister of Defense Hussein to Aweil had helped calm the situation there. Dirdeiry reported that the three-year CPA anniversary celebrations in Wau on January 14, attended by First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Vice President Ali Osman Taha, went extremely well. Dirdeiry noted that national flags were prominently displayed at the event, which was held in Southern Sudan.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: The SPLM-NCP relationship appears to be on the mend for now (at least in public) and the formation of the Executive Committee and the attendance of the vice presidents at CPA celebrations in Wau are both positive signs. Although the Presidency has not yet tackled the thorny Abyei issue, the appointment of a joint interim administration is an important step in fulfilling CPA requirements - though to name an administration before accepting the ABC report is a deviation from the CPA text. The Executive Committee will have its work cut out for it, as border demarcation and election issues will likely require intensive negotiations.

FERNANDEZ